

5,000,000 People; 236,092 Office Holders

By J. GRATTON GREY

Melbourne, Australia, Oct.—(By Mail). IT IS recognized all over Australia that the parliamentary system, state as well as federal, which now prevails, requires a liberal application of the pruning knife in order to reduce its annual cost to within reasonable dimensions, and to insure greater efficiency and dispatch in the transaction of public business.

The cost of the federal Parliament has increased enormously since its establishment nineteen years ago, and state legislatures have also become a greater burden upon the taxpayers than they were before the advent of federation, although one of the principal arguments advanced in support of the federation referendum was that the cost of state parliaments and the expense of administering the various state departments would be substantially reduced if the people supported the Federation ticket. So far from being redeemed by actual results, that encouraging assurance in support of the Federation movement has been completely falsified. The cost of state government in all its branches has enormously increased, while the annual outlay incurred by the Commonwealth government has swollen to very large proportions—indeed, far and away in excess of anything that was ever dreamed of when federal institutions were introduced. To people in other countries it will seem incredible that Australia's army of government employees represents one to every ten adults of the population. Of this number the Commonwealth employs 43,043 persons, drawing pay totaling \$31,742,045 for the year; while the six state governments employ a total of 193,049 persons drawing salaries amounting to \$133,620,010. Thus there is a total army of government employees—state and federal—of 236,092, which absorbs \$165,362,055 in salaries. Is this not prodigious in a country whose population has only reached five million souls of all ages and sexes?

The need for drastic economy in all branches of the state and federal services, as well as in their legislative institutions is obvious, more especially in view of the fact that participation in the late war has saddled the country with such an enormous amount of public debt, (\$1,820,000,000), the mere interest upon which will involve an expenditure of many millions annually. As far as the states are concerned, several suggested reforms have been advanced. One is that State Parliaments should be entirely abolished; another that they should consist of one House only in each state by wiping out of existence the useless excrescences of legislative councils, or Upper Houses as they are sometimes called; another that the number of members, as well as their salaries, should be reduced; but the proposal that most commends itself to the greatest number of people at the present time is the one-House system. In these State Houses some very suitable reforms could be introduced by the adoption of the system that obtains in some of the state legislatures of America. The length of the sessions might be confined to within a stipulated period of time, members paid so much per day during the session, with pro rata reductions for non-attendance, and expenses incurred in transit to and from the session to be provided by the state, instead of the passes they now hold to travel free upon the railroads as often as they please, anywhere and everywhere that railroads are available, throughout the whole term

of their membership. It is premature to speculate upon the exact nature of the reforms that will be adopted in connection with state parliaments, but such changes will be demanded by the electors in the near future as will materially simplify these institutions and reduce the expenditure they now entail to something like reasonable proportions.

Coming now to the Commonwealth Legislature, one of the reformative proposals which is being placed before the people is the abolition of the Senate. This body is elected upon exactly the same franchise as the House of Representatives, namely adult suffrage, and the adoption of the bicameral system rests upon the assumption that the Second or Upper House, as the Senate is called, will act as a check upon any hasty or ill-advised legislation that the House of Representatives may pass and send on to the Senate for its concurrence. The experience of the last nineteen years entirely disposes of this contention in support of the Senate's existence, for throughout its whole career the Senate has been as much the arena of party politics as the House of Representatives. Motions and measures are dealt with upon party lines; and however large a government's majority may be in the House of Representatives, it has no hope of getting bills upon the Statute Book that are condemned by the Opposition, if the Senate happens to be composed of more Opposites than government supporters. Again and again this obstruction has proved insurmountable, especially during that period when the Cook Conservative Government had to rely for its life upon the casting vote of the Speaker in the House of Representatives, and was confronted in the Senate by an overwhelming majority of Labor Senators. A double dissolution was the eventual consequence, but the result of the general election that followed was the overwhelming defeat of the Cook Conservative Government and the return of the Labor party to power, with large majorities both in House and Senate.

This verdict was again reversed at the general election of 1917, by the so-called National and Win-the-War party formed by the coalition of the Conservatives with Mr. Hughes and other Laborite ministers and members after their expulsion from the Labor party because of their advocacy of conscription.

It will be seen that the Senate, being no less the arena of party politics and issues than the House of Representatives, and elected also upon adult suffrage, is like the fifth wheel in a stagecoach, an expensive superfluity which could be advantageously dispensed with. In members' salaries alone, a direct saving of \$108,000 would be effected, besides the extra salaries paid to the president and chairman of committees, officers of the Senate, the big printing bill and other expenses of upkeep which, added to the other items, swell to a total of large dimensions. All this unnecessary expenditure will be saved if the movement for the abolition of the Senate is conducted to a successful issue. As to the House of Representatives, in view of the prodigious public debt which such active and extensive

participation in the war has imposed upon Australia, and the urgent need for the pursuit of a strictly economic policy of retrenchment, it is argued that members should have the good grace to voluntarily revert to the salary of \$2,000 a year originally provided for when federation was accomplished. It is also contended that free passes should be done away with, retented that free passes being restricted to the cost of transit expenses being restricted to the cost of transit between Melbourne and their homes at the opening and closing of each session. A very strong feeling is growing up against the waste of time which now results from the Houses sitting for a few hours on only three days of the week. It is considered that five days at least should be devoted to the transaction of business, and it is further contended that no man should aspire to a seat in Parliament unless he is honestly prepared to devote the whole of his time during the session to the performance of his parliamentary duties; in other words, what he is paid for doing by the public.

Within Parliament itself, the procedure might easily be simplified and improved, and the transaction of business expedited, if forms imported from the other side of the globe and musty fripperies of one kind and another were relegated to the scrap heap of effaced ancient ceremonials and practices that offend the common sense conceptions of the age we live in, and only invite ridicule when they are paraded in this young democracy.

When the Labor party happens to be in power, no Cromwell is required to enter Parliament and tell the ushers to "remove that bauble," because there is no mace upon the table, and no horsehair wigs on the heads of Mr. Speaker and the principal clerks, or long flowing gowns to complete their official equipment. But this common sense effort to conform with modern ideas and sentiments is interrupted if the Conservative party rules the roost in the next Parliament after a general election. Then the mace is taken out of its seclusion in the parliamentary catacombs, carried across the shoulder of the sergeant-at-arms as he marches in front of the Speaker at the opening of Parliament each day, and is then solemnly deposited on the table after the usual stereotyped prayer has been rehearsed. Mr. Speaker is wigged and gowned, and the clerks have also got their stage properties on, and try hard to look uncommonly imposing and dignified. And when the House is summoned to the Senate to listen to the session-opening speech of the governor-general, the procession of members is headed by the mace-carrying sergeant-at-arms and the bewigged and begowned Speaker and clerks, who are received in the Senate, in the midst of much bowing and scraping and other idiotic buffoonery, by the knee-breeched Usher of the Black Rod in all his official war paint and feathers, and looking as intensely important as if the fate of nations depended upon the punctilious performance of what he considers the onerous duties devolving upon him.

To any sensible human being, the whole spectacle has all the appearance of a comic opera rehearsal without the music, and illustrates how conservative ideas and tastes can cling tenaciously to senseless middle age flummeries that are so glaringly out of place in a young democratic community like that of Australia.

Rare Laces Shown Here

LACE has charms for the feminine eye that few other fabrics possess. It appeals to the art sense, to the taste for a fineness that has been wrought with great pains, and to the pride of personal decorativeness. Moreover, lace has been a ready ally of all that effort at heightened mystery which has played so large a part in femininity's conquest of the masculine world.

How early the invention of "open work" was made we do not know, but meshed articles of women's wear have been discovered in the tombs of ancient Egypt. In our own age the rage for lace is by no means new, for as early as 1210 we have record of a rule for English nuns which reads: "Make no purses or lace, but shape and sew poor men's clothes." The two oldest pieces of ornamental lace in the world are at Assisi, and consist of two albs said to have been worn by St. Francis.

On the left is shown a wonderful lace gown, once the possession of the unfortunate French empress, Eugenie. It is now owned by Maj. George W. McLean. It is valued at \$25,000. When the empress was compelled to leave France, she disposed of this gown among other possessions, and though she has lived beyond the span of average mortal life, her gown will long outlast her. On the right is a rare cape of old Spanish lace which has been brought across the seas from Madrid for exhibition at the Boston Lace Show.

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